

Nailsea & District Croquet Club
Draft Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 12 January 2016

Chair: Andrew Wimshurst
Present: Kathy Wallace, Coral Harrison, Brian Roynon, Brigit Clayton,
Peter Dyke, Mike Tracy, Linda Shaw

1. Apologies None

2. Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 17 November 2015

The minutes were signed as a true and accurate record of the meetings held on 17 November

Matters arising from Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 17 November 2015

Kathy had thanked Jo Vansittart for her role in the pavilion cleaning organisation and had confirmed that Jo wished to relinquish the responsibility

Andrew had sent two e-mails concerning the SWF minutes but had had no reply to either. It was felt that the SWF Committee were struggling with shortages of personnel but it was worrying if communications with clubs were breaking down.

There is still a shortage of one captain for the GC League teams.

4. Treasurer's Report

Mike reported a deficit of £3192.73 and a balance of £10 296.99 less unpresented cheques. He also reported:

"The net income from the Christmas lunch was £116.55. This includes expenditure of £250 for the hire of the Masonic Hall for both the 2015 and 2016 Christmas lunches which appeared in last year's accounts.

Take up for the 100 club is slow – 13 units paid for so far. This is precisely the same position as we were at this time last year, so it is not unreasonable to hope for more members to participate when we get closer to the start of the season.

I have received £70 for the skittles evening so far – Kathy may have more to hand over at this meeting.

We have paid no rates for several years, having benefitted from 100% discretionary relief. This discretion is under review, but there will be no change for at least 12 months. This subject will be discussed as an agenda item in its own right later in the meeting"

Kathy had an additional £90 for Skittles bookings

5. Property Report (Brian Roynon)

“Stop Boards.

Before Christmas Tony Willoughby and Brian McCausland repaired all the stop boards and added a top boards to all the boards for the North boundary. We should be all set for next season well done.

Bisques and Clips.

Chris Jackson has painted all the clips and has replaced all the damaged bisques. He has also increased the number.

Chris has also increased reserve stock which will be made available to Peter for the Short Croquet Competition.

Trolleys.

The 4 main trolleys have been fitted with new centre peg storage tubes to accommodate the new slightly bigger diameter pegs. Hopefully this will stop the continual damage.

The Gate.

The small gate that Peter reported as “having lost an argument” has now been repaired. I don't think it was vandalised as the remaining screws were very rusty and brittle when attempting to remove them.

The spring closer has not been refitted as the adjustment removable pin is no longer removable. I will look to replace it in due course.

The Club House.

Before Christmas Brian and Robin installed the lights and a socket outlet in the roof. They also installed a supply in the gents ready for the anticipated hand dryer.

It is intended to fit the hatch and loft ladder in the next few weeks.

Hedge Cutting.

I have spoken to the hedge contractor and requested a hard cut in February and a trim in July.

We have agreed to cut the hedges on the 1st February, starting at 9.30am, where we will agree the degree of reduction and the price. To be paid on the day by cheque.”

The cost of the hedge cutting was likely to be £350 to £400.

Andrew wondered about the possibility of using slatted stop boards so that the weight would be reduced.

6. Membership Report

On the Application for Membership form, the section asking for help with club tasks was re-worded.

It was agreed that, in future, the Membership Secretary would contact the parents of applicants for junior membership to ensure that their contact details would only appear on the published membership list with their knowledge and approval. CH

7. Lawn maintenance report (John Wallace)

“1. Lawns

The lawns were closed on 18 December and will re-open on 26/3/16. During the winter period the grass is being cut at 9.0mm and sarel spiked about once a month-weather permitting. Cutting frequency in February will be every two weeks. Along the North boundary there is some black algae which is being treated with further localised Iron spraying and sarel spiking. Sunshine and dry weather are the best treatment but these are not readily available at present.

Despite the mild weather there does not appear to be a Leatherjacket problem. There is evidence of bird pecking around a few hoop holes which suggests there may be a few present but the autumn Chlorpyrifos spray (now banned) does generally seem to have worked. I understand that a number of garden lawns in the area have been badly affected this winter so a method for ensuring future protection is required. I understand that Bayer have now ceased production of Merit – a granular form of Leatherjacket and Chafer Grub protection using a different chemical. This chemical is thought to affect bees and is also banned but existing stocks can be applied next autumn only. Merit is also very expensive. Locally, Greensleeves have used a combination of Merit and Chlorpyrifos but are struggling to find an alternative form of protection. They have not found Nematodes to be effective but Pitchcare tell me that Golf Clubs do use them successfully. Further research is needed. Duncan Hector does not yet have a solution to offer as he also has had poor experience of Nematodes.

2. Materials for 2016

All the materials for 2016 have been delivered and are being stored in the clubhouse. The only exception is the 1L bottle of Primo Maxx which Duncan Hector will deliver personally to us next spring. This is a licensed chemical that cannot be posted and will be stored in our chemical cupboard along with a record of usage. A separate record of usage will be kept off site by Greensleeves. Both Duncan Hector and Greensleeves are happy with this arrangement. Greensleeves will be providing the supervision required when the Primo Maxx is sprayed on the lawns.

4. Irrigation

The new mobile irrigation system has been ordered at a cost, including installation of £865. Installation of the necessary pipework and valves in the machine room is scheduled for the week beginning the 18th January.

The system should be capable of supplying 1.6 m³ of water per hour via three sprinklers that will need to be moved periodically. The sprinklers cover about one quarter of a pair of lawns so three moves are required to irrigate a pair of lawns.

3. Manpower and DATES for 2016.

All the 2016 maintenance tasks now have manpower allocated to them with the exception of weed control. In the spring I hope to persuade one or two beginners to take on this task. A full list of teams and draft rotas is being sent with this report. It will be circulated to members next week. Hopefully date clashes etc can be ironed out and the rotas finalised by the end of January.

There is one **IMPORTANT** decision that needs committee agreement relating to the Spraying & Fertilising Rota. The main points to note are:

a. After further discussions with Duncan Hector and Farmura (part of Aquatrols who manufacture Aqueduct and Revolution) it seems that we can mix the Revolution (but not Aqueduct) in with the Liquid Bio fertiliser and Primo Maxx growth regulator. This reduces the number of sprays from thirteen to nine.

b. Revolution needs to be watered in to the soil in order to be effective. In the UK, Farmura recommend that the product is diluted at a rate of 1L to 42L water and applied at a rate of 1.9L per 1000m². They also recommend that the Revolution is applied in early evening and left to soak in overnight. This means we have to apply it using three separate sprays in the early evening. Those three sprays can also include the liquid bio feed and Primo Maxx. If the weather is very dry with no rain forecast some further application of water using the new emergency irrigation system may be required.

c. Application of Revolution needs to start in early April before there is any possibility of Local Dry Patch starting to form. Revolution also needs to be applied at four week intervals to ensure continued effectiveness. If LDP is allowed to form Revolution will not cure it.

d. Primo Maxx is a licensable product and we can only spray it under supervision of a licenced person. Locally, Greensleeves have said they can provide supervision between 5pm and 6pm any day except Wednesdays.

e. Normally, NDCC lawns are in use regularly on Monday, Thursday and Friday evenings. With Greensleeves not being available on Wednesdays, only Tuesday evenings are available for spraying

Combining all these factors together leads to the initial Revolution being applied on Tuesday, 12 April and on subsequent Tuesday evenings at 4 week intervals. This requires the lawns to be closed for the evening, starting at 5pm, on the following dates:

Tuesday	10 May
Tuesday	7 June
Tuesday	5 July
Tuesday	2 August

Also Tuesday 12th April - not involving the contractor

Tuesday evenings are sometimes used for external social events and occasional league fixtures. I would be grateful if the committee could agree the above lawn closure dates. I hope the programme of social events can work around these dates. If a home league match has been arranged for any of these dates then the spraying would have to be switched to the Monday or Thursday evening of that week. This also applies to the social events.

John Wallace 9/1/16”

It was felt that it was desirable to be able to offer prospective visitors as much choice of dates as possible and they sometimes booked at fairly short notice. Hence Monday evenings would be a better time to close the lawns for spraying. Kathy to inform John KW

8. Skittles Evening

The number of players was likely to be about 20 so we would probably just use 2 alleys.

9. Requests for lawn hire from

(i) regional WI

It was decided to offer the WI a rate of £400 for the use of 4 lawns and the pavilion, including the kitchen. This was felt commensurate with the evening rate for social groups. Kathy would inform Violet who had made the request

KW

ii) Mike Blower

As Mike was bearing all the cost himself and the 40 people he wished to bring would not be able to all play at the same time, it was agreed to offer him a rate of £150 for a Tuesday evening. It was hoped that there might be a recruitment aspect to this visit. Kathy to reply to Mike Blower

KW

10. CA Tournament bids

The Club is not in a position to make bids for 2018 as the current plan is to level the lawns at the end of 2017. Kathy to respond to the CA

KW

11. Payment for courses for NDCC members wishing to become coaches

It was decided that NDCC members who wished to go on a course to become a coach or to upgrade their coaching qualification would be able to apply in advance for reimbursement of the cost of the course fees from NDCC. Accommodation and travel costs could not be reimbursed. This information would appear in the handbook and on the club website.

KW

Andrew noted that the need for coaching for improvers and lower handicapped players had not been resolved. It was agreed in principle that coaches from other clubs could be asked to consider coaching Nailsea members. There was also the possibility of some experienced players offering an evening each of coaching on a specific topic. Linda offered to run a course at the beginning of the 2016 season for the class of 2015 and her offer was accepted

LS

12. Club competitions including availability rules for semis and finals

Semi-finalists who were not available for the scheduled days could arrange to play on another occasion provided the opponent was in agreement and liaison was made with Linda. For Finals weekend, attendance was required unless the player was playing in specific matches - League matches, events for which they had qualified, or invitation events. These would generally be at a high level

There was some discussion about the Mad Monday rules concerning handicap changes and the two tiers of competition. Would players stay in the same tier? If they moved, how would their percentage success rate be calculated? Linda to seek further clarification from Chris Jackson on this matter.

LS

The minimum handicap for entry to the MM competition would be 4 –as of the date of first participation.

13. OBE Tournament

The draft ad for the Croquet Gazette was approved with the proviso that “association” was changed to “Association Croquet”. Peter to liaise with Terry to fix a date – before the end of this week so that Terry could send the ad before he went away.

PD

The OBE laws will be put on the Club website as well as the ad.

KW

14. Rate relief

Mike gave a detailed account of the situation to date:

He had received a letter from North Somerset Council on 23rd December (dated 21st December) in which the Council announced that they wished to change the criteria for granting discretionary relief on non-domestic rates. NDCC has enjoyed 100% relief for several years, saving us £1,389.45 in the last financial year. The proposed new policy would be to the detriment of NDCC’s finances as the maximum relief would be 80%, and to be determined on a case by case basis. Furthermore it is proposed that relief would only be granted for 3 years. Before any change in policy can be implemented there has to be a consultation process to which we were invited to contribute. The consultation is carried out through an on-line questionnaire and the consultation period was from 30th November to 11th January. In view of the short notice he immediately scanned and circulated the letter to all members of the committee.

He spoke to Andrew Wimshurst shortly after Christmas and they agreed that Mike would draft a response from the club and send it to Andrew and John Wallace (who has much experience of dealing with NSC’s processes) for review. He would then combine the three inputs into a second draft and send it to the whole committee for consideration. He sent out the first draft on 29th December and received responses from John and Andrew the next day. The second draft was compiled and sent to the committee on 31st December.

Mike had then received another letter from the Council dated 30th December stating that the consultation period had been extended to 31st January.

Mike was of the opinion that the change in policy was not driven by a desire to retarget the discretionary relief in the context of a growing demand from new organisations; rather it was intended to reduce expenditure and/or increase income. Furthermore, as the consultation document states, councils currently retain 49% of the rates income, but this will change to 100% by 2020 (with a corresponding reduction in central government funding, no doubt). This means that the cost of discretionary relief will effectively be doubled.

Mike also believes that the consultation process is very unlikely to change NSC’s plans, but nevertheless we should take this opportunity to put our views forward. He suggests that we should make plans on the assumption that we will lose all or some of the discretionary relief.

We could, for example

- Accept the increased cost and slow down our improvement plans if necessary.
- Increase the annual subscription by something like £15.
- Challenge our rating valuation.
- Apply for Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) status, which would qualify us for mandatory 80% relief.

Such considerations are for the future, the priority at the moment being agreement on our response to the consultation questionnaire.

Mike then responded to Linda's input which had subsequently been made.

- *Linda suggests that we need to recognise the validity of the consultation while arguing our case strongly and that NSC should have the freedom to support as many groups as possible. Mike's view is that as stewards of the club's assets we should do what we can to protect them. As he had stated before, he does not believe that the intention was to target the relief in a new way, rather to reduce it. He would like to see some evidence of this demand for rate relief from more organisations. His research had shown that the phrase 'non-domestic rates' is often taken to mean 'business rates' and that, consequently, we are being affected by a change in government policy made with rates for businesses in mind.*
- *Linda thinks that it is reasonable to expect every ratepayer to contribute to the bill. Mike asked that we be more specific and say that we are considering occupiers of non-domestic properties rather than all ratepayers. As individuals we are all ratepayers and the likelihood is that we are now going to be charged again for playing croquet on ground for which we pay rent to NSC, save NSC the cost of looking after the land and receiving no services from NSC whatsoever. However, it should be noted that there are many organisations that receive mandatory relief of 80%, these being charities, organisations that are not charities but have charitable objectives and premises like charity shops. This umbrella includes churches and CASCs. The difference to NSC is that the mandatory relief is paid to it from central government and so costs them nothing. Granting discretionary relief reduces NSC's income. Debate over the time limitation question has been interesting. Discretionary relief can be granted to a business when it starts to help it get off the ground. It seems appropriate to make this relief time limited. For organisations like ours you are either entitled to it or you are not. If you are, then time limitation seems to me to be inappropriate.*

A debate followed and it was decided that Mike should slightly modify the response to make it less forceful. He would also remove the comment concerning the timing of

the initial letter from NSC as they had, in the meantime, extended the deadline for submission of responses.

The Committee expressed their gratitude to Mike for the time he had given to this matter, particularly as he had done it over the immediate Christmas period MT

15. Sponsorship

A member had asked for ideas/help with seeking sponsorship. It was felt that sponsorship for croquet was difficult to obtain and that it was a matter for individuals, not the Club. Andrew to report back to the member who had made the enquiry AW

16. AOB

Brian asked about the Handicap situation. There will be a meeting of the Handicap Committee before the end of January and Andrew will sit in on the meeting. PD AW

Peter presented copies of the League Fixtures arranged so far. The list is nearly complete although a small number of dates may need to be changed. There are still some AC captains to be appointed in addition to the GC captain shortage. As soon as the Fixtures are confirmed, Kathy will send out an e-mail asking members to state their preferences and availability for the AC and GC teams. Violet's offer to allocate players to AC teams, in the light of their preferences, was gratefully accepted. Peter would allocate players to GC teams. KW PD

Mike had obtained a quote of £8.95 per hoop for powder coating. This would be instead of the Hammerite that he had applied in recent seasons. Mike wondered whether to get one set of hoops coated as a trial. Kathy thought that this would lead to differential ease of hoop running from one lawn to another. It was decided to get the four sets of hoops used on the large lawns coated at a cost of around £200. In the past re-sizing had not been successful so this would not be requested. MT

Linda raised the issue of Child Protection. The policy was in place but she would ask the Child Protection offer for a review LS

17. Date of next meeting

This was arranged for Tuesday 9 February